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It was Raju's little sister Meena's birthday. It was a grand occasion for Raju. Nandu, Vinay, Rekha, Ashok all were to come with beautiful presents.

Raju couldn't think of a gift. He wanted to present something very very very special.

He thought and thought and thought. Suddenly he hit upon an idea.

A mask, a beautiful colourful mask. Green stripes on the cap, pink on the cheeks, crimson lips.

With dashes of paint in no time he painted a mask on a piece of cardboard and cut it into shape.

What a colourful present: Meena was delighted.

Everyone talked about Raju and his wonderful present.

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* *A Tale of Two Trees*—a suspenseful episode in the life of the Divine-Child Krishna

* *Pictorial accounts of Jahangir and Shah Jahan in Story of India*

AND

A bunch of delightful tales from many lands carefully chosen and profusely illustrated to mark this birth-anniversary special number of your magazine.



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BUMPER STORY NUMBER—NEXT!

The next issue of your magazine will mark the beginning of the 14th year of its life. On this occasion you will have a feast of stories from many lands, profusely illustrated. Look forward to this special story number.

* * *

The Contest A announced in April ("The most interesting humorous anecdote I have ever come across") has brought highly encouraging response. While the winners are N. Hariprasad Rao, Bangalore, Paresh Chandra Pattanaik, Talcher, C. Vivek Kumar, Bolarum and R. Sujatha, Madras, several more entries have been selected for publication. We publish two pieces in this issue. Rest afterwards. (Others will be informed by post.)

CONTESTS FOR JUNE '83

CONTEST 'A'

Write in 100-150 words on "A Memorable Adventure in My Life". (Please state the no. of words at the end.)

CONTEST 'B'

- (1) What are the six systems of ancient Indian philosophy?
- (2) What is Yoga? Answer in 20-25 words.

**GOLDEN
WORDS
OF
YORE**

जातस्य नदीतीरे तस्यापि तृणस्य जन्मसाफल्यम्
यत् सलिलमज्जन्ताकुलजनहस्तालम्बनं भवति

*Jātasya nadītīre tasyāpi tṛṇasya janmasāfalyam
Yat salilamajjanakulajanahastālbhanam bhavati*

Even the existence of a grass on the river-bank can become significant if by holding on to it a drowning man can be saved.

— The Panchatantram

THEIR MOST AMUSING ANECDOTES

THE SURGEON IN SEARCH OF HAT

It happened in a hospital—not in our country, of course!

A patient, who had just regained his sense after an operation and had been brought back to the ward, smiled and said, "Thank God, all was done so smoothly!"

"Don't rejoice so soon," commented the patient in the next bed. "I too had thought so. But they had to reopen my stomach to recover a pair of lost pincers!"

"And what about me? Wasn't my stomach opened for the second time because they had forgotten a glove inside it?" said the patient next.

Just then the surgeon came into the ward and asked, "Has anyone seen my hat?"

The first patient fainted.

—N. Hariprasad Rao,
Bangalore.



THE WAY WITH THE CUSTOMER

The old man was about to hand over the charge of his optical shop to his son.

He was heard briefing the young man, "Sonny, after you've fitted the glasses and the customer asks you what the charge will be, say 'Rupees twentyfive' and pause for a second and see if he flinches. If he does not, then say, 'for the frame. The lense will be another twentyfive.' Then you pause again, for another second, and give a hurried look at him. If he does not flinch, say firmly, 'for each!' Do you follow?"

—Paresh Chandra Patitanaik,
Talcher.

Answers to Contest B

1. The Shiva Temple *Prambanan* (Parambrahman) near Jogjakarta, Java, Indonesia.
2. Babur.

Winner: Malini Francis, Bangalore.

NEWS FLASH

Poems of Gitanjali

She was in her teens, charming and talented. Her name was Gitanjali—after Rabindranath Tagore's immortal collection of poems. Born in Meerut in 1961, she died in Bombay in 1977 of cancer. After her death her mother traced a bunch of her poems, tucked under her bed and elsewhere. Now published by Oriel Press, Stockfield, U.K., with an introduction by Prithvi Nandy, *Poems of Gitanjali* reveal a highly sensitive mind—but one that was capable of growing above pain. She goes into the unknown, singing:

My pathway
Lights up
With lightning
That thunder strikes.



The Latest Brand of Ignorance

Many are not conscious of the great death-trap that is being prepared by man for man. Atom bomb destroyed Hiroshima in 1945. If the nuclear-bomb-stock the world has built by now was divided into the Hiroshima-size bombs, there could be a blast a minute for continuous two years. Says the scientist Dr. Helen Coldicott, the governments are "uniformly ignorant about the medical, scientific and ecological consequences of a nuclear war"



116Faster Mile in Running History

Mike Boit of Kenya ran the fastest mile in recorded history—in 3 minutes and 28 seconds in Auckland. It was a downhill run. Steve Scott of U.S.A. emerged second—taking a second more!





LET US KNOW

I read the term Zen Buddhism again and again. I know Buddhism. What is Zen? —Binapani Maheshwari, Gaya.

Zen is derived from the Chinese Ch'an, which again is derived from the Sanskrit Dhyana (meditation).

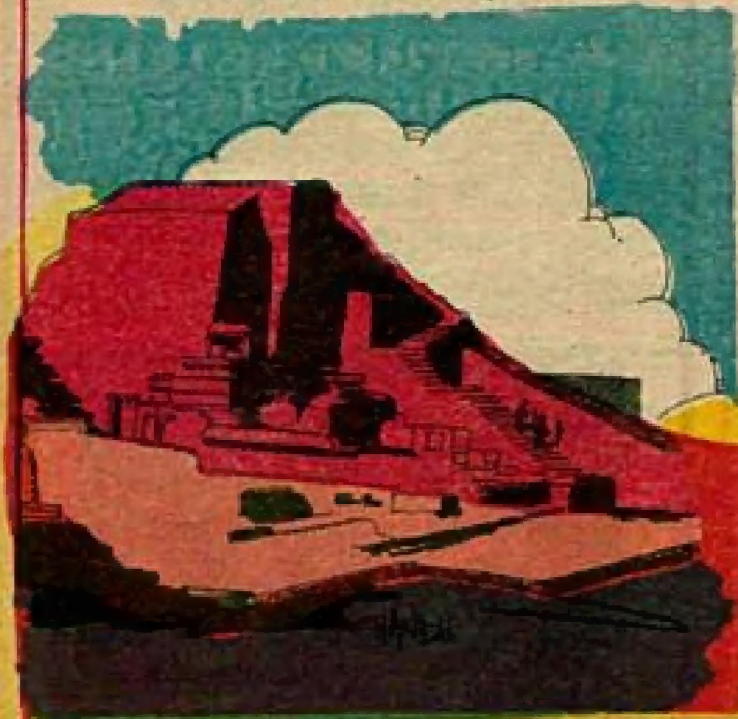
Zen as practised today (mostly in Japan, but also in parts of the West), follows the doctrine of a Chinese sage of 8th century, Hui Neng. Through some special method of meditation the Zen Buddhists try to realise the truth which, they believe, is in the heart and not in the scriptures.



A popular reference book states that the world's first university was at Karueein, in Fez, Morocco, founded in A.D.859. Is this correct?

—Sadanand, Ootcamund.

No. While many great educational institutions must have preceded it, we know at least of Nalanda, which was a full-fledged Buddhist Univeristy in the early part of A.D. 7th century, when the Chinese traveller Huen Tsang visited the institution. It had a library accommodated in three huge buildings, one of which was nine-storeyed.



(Story so far: Warned by a prophecy that the eighth issue of his cousin, Princess Devaki, would cause him death, Kamsa, the demon-king of Mathura, killed Devaki's children one after another. The eighth child, however, was carried across the river and exchanged with the daughter of King Nanda of Gopa. Kamsa mistakes the female child to be Devaki's and dashes it to death, but is informed by a voice that his would-be destroyer is growing up elsewhere. Kamsa deposes several murderous agents to kill all new-born children. An ogress, Putana, tries to kill Krishna, but loses her own life.)

6. DRAMA OVER THE CLOUDS

From far and near thousands came to witness the awe-inspiring sight: the ogress Putana lying sprawled over a portion of the castle that had collapsed under her weight. She looked like a hillock planted on a wrong site. All stood aghast while children shrieked at the bizarre

spectacle.

Those who had seen the ogress when she approached the castle as a charming lady, well-behaved and well-dressed, could not believe their own eyes. How deceptive appearances can be! How much evil can hide in a false smile!

As the news of Putana's death





parents did not know how their children disappeared. Once in a while a mother could see a ghoulish figure escaping with her child, but all she could do was shriek and shout. That did not stop the demon from carrying out its mission. In myriad ways a demon could give his human pursuers the slip.

Cries of horror were heard from all over Mathura. That only made Kamsa gleeful. He believed that the chances of his enemy growing up were getting reduced with every child killed.

But his happiness proved short-lived. Report of the infant terrible born to King Nanda made him pensive. Who can say if this was not the child of the dreaded prophecy? But Nanda was a king—wise, strong and popular. To take away his son was not going to be easy.

"If I am destroying children by the dozen, there is no reason why I should not take special steps to finish Nanda's son," Kamsa thought.

Gopa went festive when people realised how miraculously their tiny prince saved himself and unmasked the ogres.

However, the incident caused much worry to King Nanda and

spread to Mathura, Kamsa stood stunned. Putana was as mighty as a thunderbolt. Besides, the poison she stored in her breast was so deadly that it could put even an elephant to instant death! How on earth could an infant put an end to such an ogress?

The demons Kamsa had employed to devour or kill the recently born children were doing their job with great enthusiasm. They spied into every house. Whenever they spotted a kid that looked less than a year old, they snatched it away. Most of the time they did their work stealthily. The

Queen Yasoda. Had Putana come on her own or was sent by someone? If on her own, the child was now safe from her, but what if she was only acting at someone else's instance?

It was of course very hard to believe that somebody should be hostile to a child who won the heart of all who happened to see him only once.

The child was dear to all and it was not right to prevent the admiring people from thronging round the child. But the queen saw to it that only the most faithful and alert maids of hers held the child when she was not holding him herself.

* * * *

It was a pleasant afternoon. The queen took the child out into the garden. Her maids accompanied her.

Tall trees had thrown an ever-green wall around the garden. Gentle breeze with their numerous branches made a pleasant rustle. The garden abounded in fragrant flowers and choice fruits. The child, held by the queen, threw his tender arm at them in a bid to pluck them. Sometimes a chirping bird or a fleeting butterfly attracted the child's attention and he smiled at them.

The queen and her maids





concentrated on the child. They did not observe how fast the atmosphere was changing. There was a blast of cool breeze. Only then they noticed the sky fast growing gloomy. Huge rolls of cloud were unfurling themselves speedily. The trees had begun to sway violently.

"Let us go back," said the queen, holding the child tight to her bosom.

All on a sudden a mushroom of dust rose to blind them. There was a terrific noise—as if a thousand snakes hissed at once!

A terrible whirlwind, throwing everything on its

course into a spiral upward movement, was rushing towards them.

"Let's throw a ring round the queen!" shouted the chief maid. She was obeyed instantly. But they heard the queen yelling. "We are all here, O Queen, at your service!" they shouted, but none could see the others.

The whirlwind seemed to leave them and move upward. The cloud of dust became thinner. Only then the maids realised why the queen yelled. Her arms were empty. The child was missing.

The panicky maids groped for the child on the ground. But he was no to be seen.

"Gone, gone is my child—swept off by the whirlwind!" cried out the queen and she slumped on the grass. The maids found no word to console her. While two of them sat supporting her almost life-less body, the others still continued their search.

* * *

A drama was taking place far above the clouds. The whirlwind that snatched away the child from the queen's arms was in fact a demon with an extraordinary power. Needless to say, that was the power to

strike as a whirlwind! His name was Trinavarta and he had been commissioned by Kamsa to lift Nanda's child and to dash him to the ground.

Trinavarta tried to do that. He whisked the child up. But, to his great surprise he found himself unable to throw the child off him. The child managed to cling to him and he was obliged to assume his dark fearful form!

Desperately the demon tried to get rid of the child, but in vain. The child's arms were getting terribly tight round his neck.

The demon gave out a fierce cry. People on the earth took it to be a thunderclap. Its vibrations dispersed the clouds and it echoed against the hills below. Next moment the child

gave him a push. The demon fell amidst the hills, far from the towns and villages. He was shattered to pieces.

The child dropped through the clouds—straight on to his mother's lap.

"Here is the child—our charming child!" the maids shouted.

And the child was crying—as if afraid of the wind and the cloud.

The queen opened her eyes. She then took the child in her clasp and got up and ran into the palace. The maids followed her with sighs of relief, exchanging among themselves looks of surprise and smiles of happiness. They found it hard to stop feeling amazed over the moment when the child looked invisible!



AN EXCHANGE OVER THE PHONE

Grandpa Chowdhury was having a shave when the telephone rang. "Rajesh, will you please..."

"Surely, grandpa, surely!" Rajesh ran to the telephone and lifted the receiver and said, "Hello!"

Grandpa, of course, could not hear what the caller said, but he heard Rajesh asking him, "Whom do you want?" After the caller had replied to him, he was heard saying, "He is too busy to attend the phone now. Ring up later." He put down the

receiver and ran back to Mr. Chowdhury and reported, "Someone wished to talk to you. I said..."

"I know what you said, Rajesh! In fact you said nothing wrong. But...."

"But?"

"You should have said the same thing a bit differently."

"Why? Was I rude?"

"You were not. But I should not be surprised if the caller took you to be on the verge of being rude. First of all, instead of saying "Hello" you should



have given either our telephone number or should have mentioned whose house it is. That is observing a mild rule. That would have informed the caller whether he was in touch with the right place or not."

"I understand. He demanded to know who I am!"

"And instead of saying who you are, you demanded to know who he wished to talk to! What was wrong if you gave your identity?"

"Um—um..."

"Then, Rajesh, instead of saying that I was too busy to talk to him, you could have simply said that I shall call him later. He could have given his number

or maybe his message too, unless it was too personal."

"He could have given that anyway!"

"How could he? You even did not let him know who you are!"

"Hm!"

"Rajesh, have you heard of the speaker who began by saying half of the audience was dull?"

"He said that, did he? The audience must have got furious!"

"Right, but he mended his statement, saying, 'I mean half of my audience is bright!' that pacified all. He said almost the something, but in different ways and that made such a difference!"



WHAT IS DEPRESSING PLEASE?

Those who knew Raghu intimately, knew how lazy he was. However, Chowdhury in whose shop he worked overlooked this defect in his nature because he was a trust-worthy man.

One day Raghu was returning from the town in Chowdhury's cart. The cart overturned and he was injured. What was worse, he got drenched in a heavy rain. That resulted in his falling sick.

Chowdhury came to see him. "Raghu, take rest as long as necessary. You will not lose your pay," said Chowdhury. He also sent a physician to attend to him.

A month passed. The physician, who came to see Raghu at regular intervals, one day told him softly, "Raghu I feel reluctant, but I have to say it, after all. It is something that might depress you! Well, you have to remain in bed for yet another month."

After a few minutes the physician rose to go.

"Wait, sir, you forgot to tell me...." Raghu signed the physician to stop.

"I told you all I wanted to!" said the physician.

"But did you not wish to say something depressing?" asked Raghu, a bit surprised.

The physician was no less surprised.



THE VANISHED IDOLS

—by Randor Guy

The sun was about to set, and the surrounding sky was bathed in coppery red tints when Sidhanta walked into the Sunset Pavillion on the western side of King Parakram's palace. The palace was specially built for the king to feast his eyes on the splendour of the setting sun, and Sidhanta had kept company with Parakram several times during those glorious moments. But that evening he found that the king had not sent for him merely to watch and admire the bounties of nature. The king

looked gloomy. Beside him, at some distance, stood a man, and with one glance the wise old minister knew that the king had a problem on his mind, and that was the reason for the urgent summons at sunset!

Sidhanta took a good long look at the great scholar Vedanga. He was sighing deeply, often, and his large eyes were very red and swollen, evidently with weeping. His long hair was dishevelled, and he stared blank. Yes, something serious had happened to the learned





man who taught scripture to the children in the palace.

What could disturb him so much? Sidhanta wondered, bowing to his king. "Come, my friend, I have great need of you. Our learned palace-teacher is in great distress, and we have to give him relief now and right now..." The king whispered softly, waving his friend to a silk carpet spread on the grass beside his low chair.

"Vedanga, pray tell me what worries you at this charming hour of dusk. We are all here to help you!"

"Dear Sidhanta, he is too heavy with grief to tell you his

loss. Let me acquaint you with the facts. Our Vedanga had inherited recently from his parents, a set of Panchaloha idols of Rama, Seeta, Lakshmana, with Hanuman at his Lord's feet. I understand that they were a rare family heirloom and had been worshipped for ages in their family. Well, Vedanga has lost those idols."

"Vedanga, my friend, now let me ask you a few questions. First, how long have they been in your prayer chamber? Next, when did you first notice the loss?" Sidhanta slipped his fingers inside his flowing beard—a sure sign that his thought-process had begun to work at full steam!

"Dear Minister," Vedanga replied in a trembling voice, "the idols came to me from our father who departed to heaven only recently. As the eldest son I came to possess them. The idols were actually our family deities and I used to worship them thrice a day. This evening I came home from my class at the palace and noticed the idols missing! My wife, Devaki, was away visiting some sick friends. Thus the theft must have taken place when nobody was at home—of course our doors

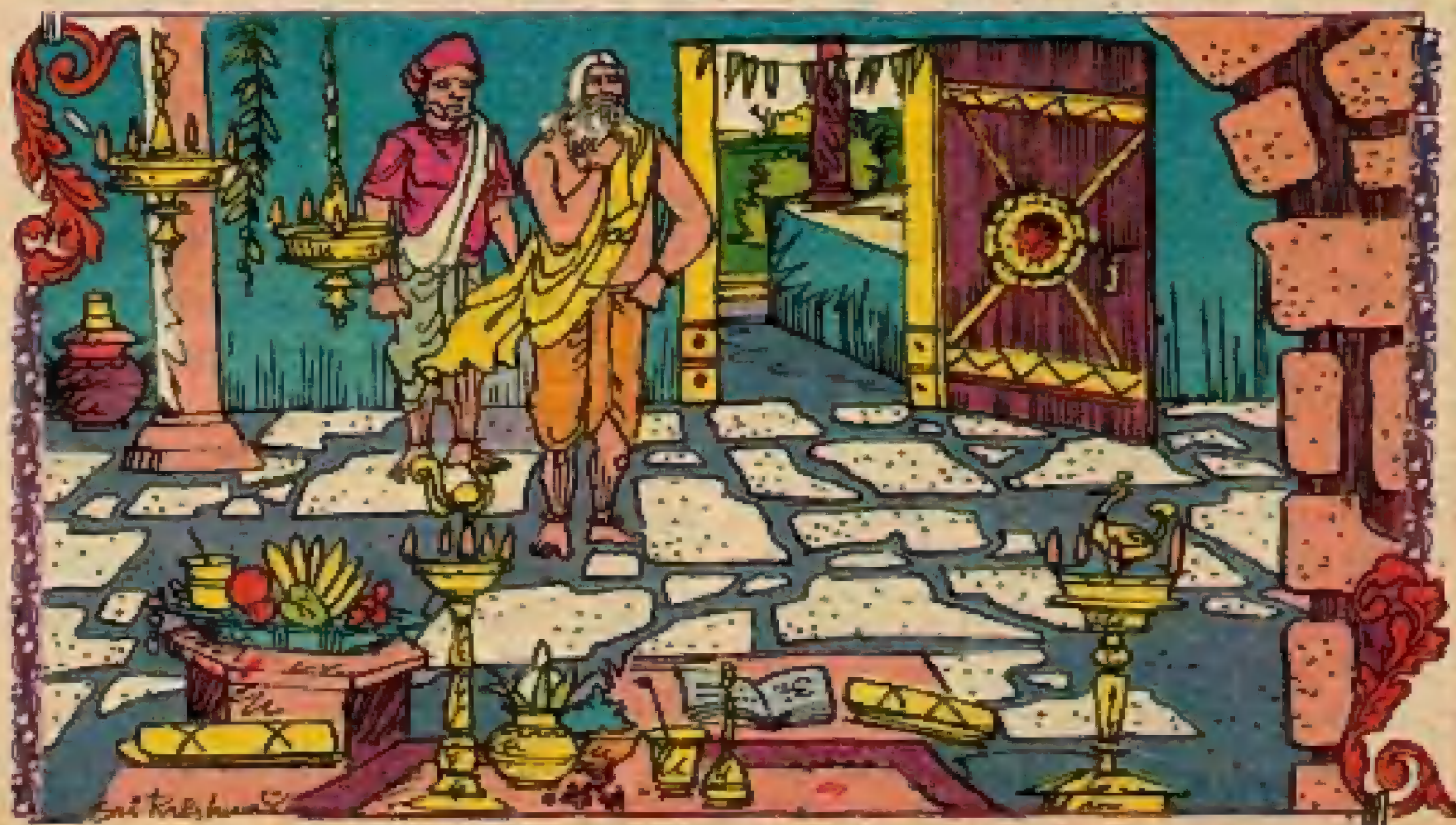
are never closed during the day. In our kingdom there is no need for that you know! But the idols are gone. Incredible!"

"Vedanga, it is turning dark fast. Please follow me, and let me visit your house and let me think in the meanwhile. Come, let us begin our search for truth! Sidhanta bowed to the king, and walked out, accompanied by the grief-struck Vedanga.

* * *

It was now as dark as night could be and stars twinkled in the distant sky. Sidhanta stood near the large well at the outskirts of Mallipuram, his mind racing fast in the direction of the solution to the problem of the

vanished idols. He had visited the learned man's house and taken a long lingering look at it. One should observe, not merely see, Sidhanta always said, and he followed his own dictum without fail. The prayer chamber had only a single door and no windows, and he had no doubt that the man or woman who had removed the idols had walked in and out through the main door. Who could that person be? Not a stranger.... not likely! Who? His fingers pulled at his beard and then he made his way to the well. This well had mineral waters, and the people of Mallipuram drank it to be cured of certain diseases of the





body as well as the mind. Sidhanta stood nearby, and waited for the palace torchbearers to join him at the well. He had earlier told the chief, Agnipala, to send him a band of torch-bearers.

When they came, Sidhanta instructed them to light their big torches, and with that light, he walked round the well, without going near the water. The earth around the well was wet and slushy, and the wise minister let his sharp eyes take slow trips all over. Slowly his eyes brightened up and then he smiled. Quickly he moved nearer to the well and peeped down. The water was far below and could not be seen in

the darkness. He stood there for a while and told the torchbearers to go back to the palace. Now he was almost laughing....!

"Vedanga, now I think I know who had removed your household deities. Before I know for sure, lead me to all the houses in this neighbourhood. I know it is rather late to go round the houses, but I am afraid it has to be done now and only now. Strike the iron while it is hot, as they say! Come, my learned friend, let's proceed!" Sidhanta told an astonished Vedanga who began to lead the wise old man around the houses. Before each house they stopped and Sidhanta bent low and stared hard at something that was beyond the learned man's comprehension! And before one house he stopped and his eyes widened. He raised his hand, and beckoned Vedanga nearer to him. And then he whispered, "Vedanga, the man who removed your idols lives here. Call him out. I do not think he is asleep for guilty men can never really sleep."

Vedanga was shocked, and he stared at Sidhanta in sheer disbelief. "Sir, it can't be....."

"Vedanga, truth is no respecter of persons. No doubt, here

lives the culprit...."

"No, he...he...he is my...my brother!"

"And also the thief so far as the idols are concerned," Sidhanta smiled.

* * *

"My first doubt arose when I visited Vedanga's house." Sidhanta began to speak softly, while Parakram, Vedanga, and a few courtiers sat on swans-down seats in a cosy chamber in the palace. "I saw only one door in the prayer chamber, and knew that was the exit used by the intruder and when I asked the neighbours they told me that they saw no strangers. So the fellow who took those idols must have been a regular visitor to the house—a friend or relative! Then I learnt that Vedanga has a brother, who has no children and also that the idols were dear to him. But they went to Vedanga by virtue of his being the first-born. So Vedanga's brother, Nandana, nursed envy in his heart and I had an idea to look at the mineral well... for Nandana was an expert at preparing medicines using those mineral waters! Near the well I saw footsteps in the slush and mud... fresh ones... I noticed two rows of footsteps embedded



in the soil, one going towards the well and another moving away from the well. The first ones were deep and heavy while the footprints in the opposite direction were not so deep. That means, someone was carrying something heavy while he walked towards the well, and he did not have that weight when he walked away from well! In short, the man dropped his load into the well and walked out light! Then I went around the houses near Vedanga's home. In front of one house, I saw wet patches and also small deposits of the slush, which has a smell of minerals. Then I knew that the

man who was in that house had done the mean act and when Vedanga told me that the man who lived in that house was his brother, I knew I was right. Our palace guards searched the well at dawn, and there were the sacred idols of Rama, Seeta, Lakshmana and Hanuman. Nandana was the culprit who stole them and threw them into the well in a fit of envy! Your Majesty, those idols are made of five metals, and this envious man thought that the minerals in the well would melt the metal and the idols would be damaged for ever. Such was his bitterness. But the idols are made of five metals and would not melt by mere mineral waters. Nana-

dana did not know it. Of course, he confessed to the crime. He was envious of the family heirlooms going to Vedanga. Now he repents, and asks for Your Majesty's pardon!"

"Sidhanta, Nandana shall suffer for his crime. What a base low emotion envy is! Nandana shall be banished for thirty years from Mallipuram. It may appear severe, but men like Nandana deserve such harsh punishment. Mallipuram needs only good people. Your ways of solving these puzzles amaze me. Mallipuram is proud of you". The king embraced his friend and minister while others clapped their hands with delight.



"The Prince and the Pauper"

(Tom Canty, a pauper, and Edward Tudor, King of England, have exchanged identities. Edward has been wrongly accused of stealing a pig, for which the penalty is death.)

At the end of fifteen minutes, Hugo, battered and bruised, slunk from the field, leaving the victor to be borne aloft upon the shoulders of the joyous rabble.



Determined to have his revenge, Hugo waited until they had come upon a village. Here, seeing a woman approaching with a fat packet of some sort in a basket, he darted stealthily after her, and snatched the packet from her. Racing back to where Edward was standing, he thrust it into his hands and then fled. Before Edward realised what was happening, the woman was upon him.



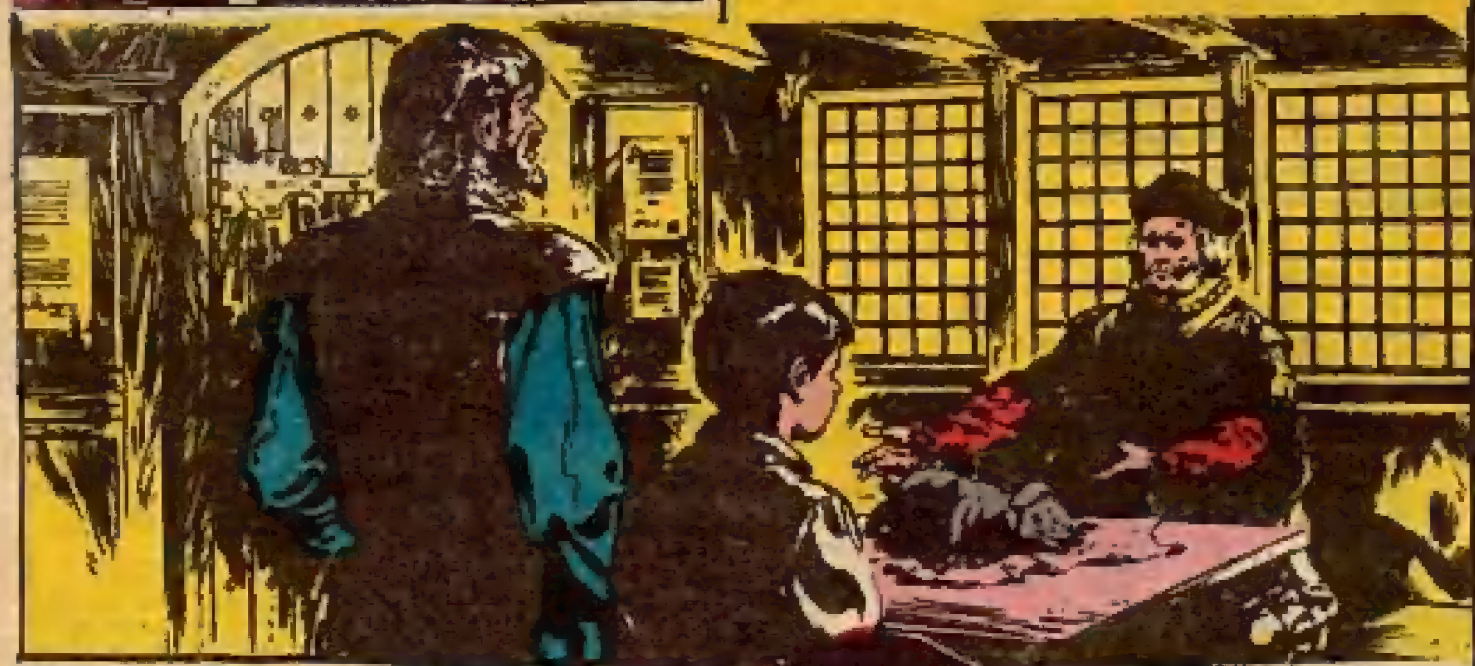
A crowd gathered around, threatening the king and calling him names. A braveny blacksmith in a leather apron made a reach for him, saying he would trounce him well, but just then a long sword flashed in the air between them. At the same time a voice said pleasantly, "Merry, good souls, let us proceed gently!"



To his joy, the king saw that the man who had delivered him was none other than Miles Hendon, who had rescued him once before from John Cauty. Springing to his side, Edward exclaimed: "Thou hast lagged sorely but thou hast come in good season!"



It was at this point that a constable arrived. On Hendon's advice, Edward made no attempt to resist arrest, and in due course the two of them were brought before a judge. The bundle which Edward was accused of stealing was unwrapped to reveal a plump little pig. "This," the judge said, "is clearly worth more than thirteen pence ha' penny. For anyone stealing anything to the value of more than that sum, the penalty is death!"



"You are clearly a poor ignorant lad, perhaps driven hard by hunger," the judge said. "So instead of hanging, you shall spend a short time in prison, which will be followed by a public flogging." It was fortunate indeed for Edward that he had his friend, Miles Hendon, by his side at that moment.



It was Miles Hendon who managed to persuade the judge that Edward was as innocent as a newly born child, and that he had clearly been made the victim of a cruel joke. Released with a warning, Edward followed Miles who said, "Then we will take to the road."

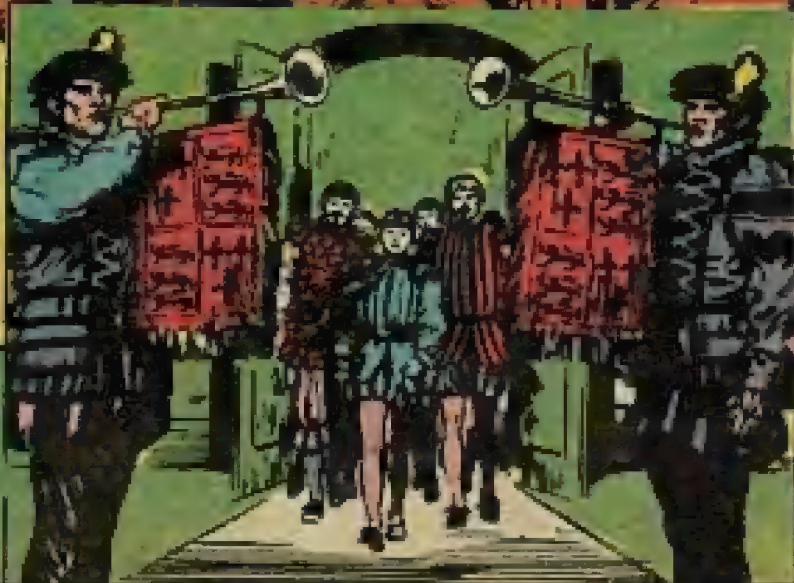


And so it was that, in due course, Edward and Miles Hendon returned to London. They arrived to find the people already celebrating the coronation of the king, which was to take place on the morrow.



It was while they were riding across London Bridge that they found themselves caught up in a free fight brought on by too much strong drink. The fight rapidly spread and, in the middle of it all, Hendon and Edward were unhorsed. In no time at all, they were hopelessly separated from each other.

And so we must leave them and return to Tom Canty. Whilst the true king wandered around the land poorly clad and fed, Tom was finding it a proud pleasure to march to dinner attended by a glittering procession.

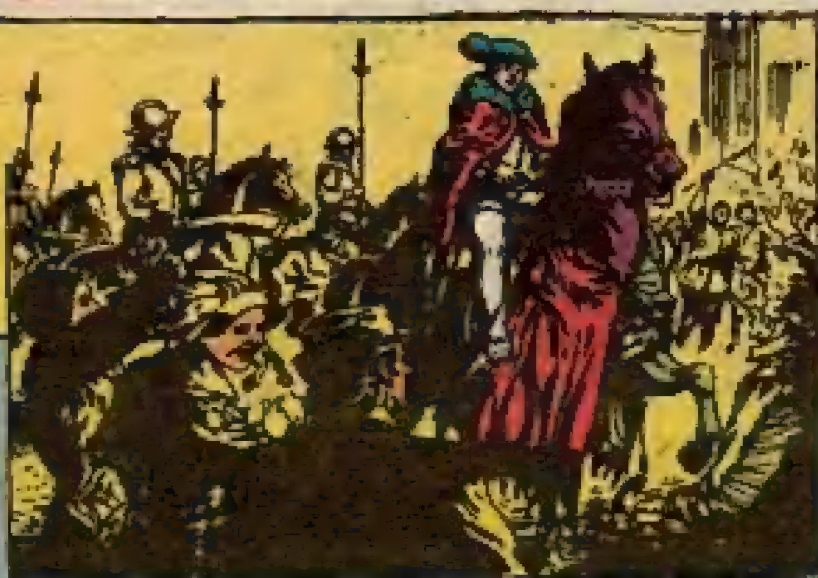


He found his four hundred servants too few and trebled them. Moreover, he enjoyed his splendid clothes and ordered more and all the time the adulation of courtiers was sweet music to his ears.



At midnight of the 19th February, Tom sank to sleep in his rich bed, guarded by loyal vassals, a happy boy for tomorrow was the day appointed for his solemn crowning as King of England.

When Tom Canty awoke the next morning, the air was heavy with a thunderous murmur of the crowds waiting to see him pass on his way to his coronation. In due course, splendidly arrayed and mounted on a prancing warhorse, Tom rode to his coronation.



Suddenly he became aware of a pair of intense eyes riveted upon him. A sickening consternation struck through him; he had recognised his mother. In an instant, she had torn her way out of the press and was at his side. "Oh, my child!" she cried. "My child!"



LESSONS—A THOUSAND GOLD MOHURS EACH

In a certain town lived a vagabond. All the townsfolk knew him to be a cheat. But he was very polished and suave in his behaviour and he spoke very sweetly.

A young merchant from Bagdad used to visit the town. Though intelligent and enterprising, he had one weakness. He relished flattery very much.

The vagabond cultivated acquaintance with him. "You are the prince among the traders,"

the vagabond said and endeared himself to the merchant. "Your very look tells me that your father and grandfather and even your grandfather's father were noble beings," the vagabond said not once but several times. The young merchant was much pleased.

"Beware of that chap!" other merchants warned the young man. He only nodded, but did not give up his friendship with the vagabond. Both met whenever the merchant visited





the town.

One day the vagabond went to Bagdad. The merchant was delighted to see him. "Since you have travelled such a long way, you must spend some days with me," he told the vagabond.

"It is because you did not come to my town for almost two years, I developed a yearning to meet you," the vagabond said.

"How sweet of you!" said the merchant, feeling quite flattered that there was someone who cared to travel a long distance just to see him. He took great care of the vagabond and introduced him to his neighbours and customers as a

kind-hearted friend and an honest man.

The vagabond enjoyed the young merchant's hospitality for a full month and then asked leave of him. There were a number of fellow-merchants and customers with the young man when the vagabond said, "I must go away now. Will you please give me my bag?"

"I feel so sad that you will be leaving me. But which bag are you speaking of, my friend?" asked the host.

"You are so forgetful! I mean the very bag I gave you for your keeping it safely as soon as I arrived—the bag with a thousand gold mohurs!" the vagabond said softly.

"You surprise me, friend, for you gave me no such bag!" the merchant expressed genuine astonishment at the vagabond's unexpected demand.

The vagabond looked at those present feigning such a shock that everybody took him to be true.

"In your excitement at meeting your friend you must have forgotten of his bag. Look in your house and it must be lying deposited somewhere," they told the merchant.

The young man scratched his

head and asserted, "No, gentlemen, I am not the one to forget such things. I am afraid I am being accused wrongly!"

"But I am being swindled of a thousand gold mohurs!" yelled the vagabond.

"Shut up!" shouted the merchant, totally disillusioned about his guest.

The quarrel attracted a crowd. Though the young merchant was known to be honest, his guest had impressed everybody during his stay that he was more honest! People were inclined to believe him and not the merchant.

It was an embarrassing

situation for the merchant. One of his dear friends, who was certain that the merchant was facing a rogue, decided to come to his rescue. He hit upon an idea which he thought to be clever and pushed his way in and told the vagabond, "Well, well, we all make mistakes and you have made a small but funny mistake. You deposited your bag with a thousand gold mohurs not with him but with me. Calm down, let the crowd disperse and I'll give you your bag. Do you now realise your mistake?"

"Gentleman, there is no mistake on my part at all! I



know that my other bag is safe with you. I know very well that you will not come out with a brazen-faced denial like this man. All the people of Bagdad cannot be rogues. after all! However, you may hand over my bag to me," said the vagabond.

The merchant's friend was at a total loss of wit.

"My honest friend, please do not make any more delay!" the vagabond said again.

The merchant's friend had no other go than to give him a thousand mohurs. Now that it was proved that the vagabond was rich, the crowd was sure

that the merchant too had his other thousand gold mohurs.

The merchant understood the situation. He did not contest his case any longer. He gave away a thousand gold mohurs.

Afterwards those who knew the vagabond told the merchant, "You have now learnt to be beware of flattery. If you have paid a price for it, well, it was worth the lesson!"

"I agree!" said the merchant.

"I thought myself clever. But now I realise how foolishly I behaved. I hope, the lesson I got was also worth the price I paid," said the merchant's friend.



THE GAMBLER'S PROFIT

The gambler returned late at night. As usual his wife opened the door frowning on him.

But the husband was beaming with happiness. The wife thought that at last he had come home with some gain, for every time he lost in the gambling.

"It seems you have won some money tonight!" she observed wryly.

"You call four thousand rupees just some money? It is a lot, isn't it?"

The wife agreed that it was a good deal of money. "Where is the money?" she asked.

"You won't see the money, but my profit cannot be disputed. I lost five thousand rupees. But I had no cash to pay. So they were pleased to take possession of my diamond ring in lieu of that amount. Now, do you remember how much I had paid for that ring? It was only a thousand rupees. Do you now realise how I made a clean profit of four thousand?" explained the happy gambler.



NATURE'S KINGDOM

PROTECTED BY A LEGEND

Considered sacred by the people of Madagascar, the indri is saved from the hunters' spears by a strange legend that has been told about it!

Stealthily, the hunter crept through the forest in Madagascar. A rustling in the branches made him look up and there, hastening away for safety, was a monkey-like creature with long, lithe limbs and a face like a dog's.

It was an indri, a member of the lemur family. Raising his spear, the hunter was preparing to throw it when a half-forgotten tribal legend raced through his mind. He had heard the fathers of his tribe say that an indri was sacred. For this reason, it should not be hunted. And if a hunter were foolhardy enough to throw a spear at it, the indri would grasp the spear and hurl it back at the hunter.

Perhaps such legends were true, he thought. In any case, he decided to take no chances and went on his way—and the indri was saved by a legend.

This is among the many tales told about the *indri*, which could not really use a spear to kill a man. It would be more likely to hurry away to a safe hiding-place in the trees.

Indris wander in small groups through the volcanic mountains of Madagascar, a large island off the south-east coast of Africa. An indri stands about a metre high and has long, black legs and virtually no tail—just a stump.

Swinging by its large hands and feet, the indri moves swiftly through the tree-tops, feeding on leaves, fruit and shoots. It picks these with its hands, which are well developed and have strong thumbs, and puts the food in its mouth.

Sometimes this method of feeding makes the indri seem almost human, although this impression is offset by its agile, monkey-like build and its face which resembles a dog's.

How It Got Its Name

In fact, the people of Madagascar call it "the dog of the forest". The name by which we know it was given to it in an unusual way. When a European was being shown the wildlife of Madagascar by a local guide, the guide exclaimed in Malagasy, "Indri izy," meaning, "There it is." The European mistook this for the animal's name, and the mistake has been perpetuated.

Another story says that the name indri came from the Malagasy name of *endrina*. In some districts, however, it is called *babakoto* or "little man".

Indris are not found over the whole of Madagascar. A range of mountains running through the island cuts the indris off from the plains on the western side. They are thus confined to the forests in the east, where they roam about in the day in groups of four or five. However, some of them prefer to move around on their own.

The largest of the lemur family, the indri has an opposable great toe, the remainder being webbed. These give it great agility in the trees. It has a velvety-black head, shoulders and arms, which are offset by lighter patches.

In every drove, however, there are individuals with more lighter areas than darker ones, and there are others whose entire coat is white.



The lemur family, to which they belong, is a varied one. There are large and small lemurs. Of these, perhaps the best known are the bush babies of East Africa, which are always a favourite in zoos.

These pretty animals have soft woolly fur, long tails, large eyes and big ears which can be folded close to the head.

Madagascar is the home not only of the indri but also of the aye-aye, a lemur which is about

as big as a cat. On each hand it has a long, thin third finger. This is useful when the aye-aye goes in search of woodboring grubs. After gnawing through the wood that protects them, it pokes at the grubs with its long third finger and eats them up eagerly.

Many varieties of lemur live in Madagascar, providing plenty of company for the indris as, protected by legend, they swing their way lithely through the trees.



THE NECKLACE AND THE NECK

Kusum, the young wife of Madhav, was excited and restless from the very morning. She visited her neighbour, Leela, and drew her attention to the glittering new necklace she wore.

"How charming!" exclaimed Leela.

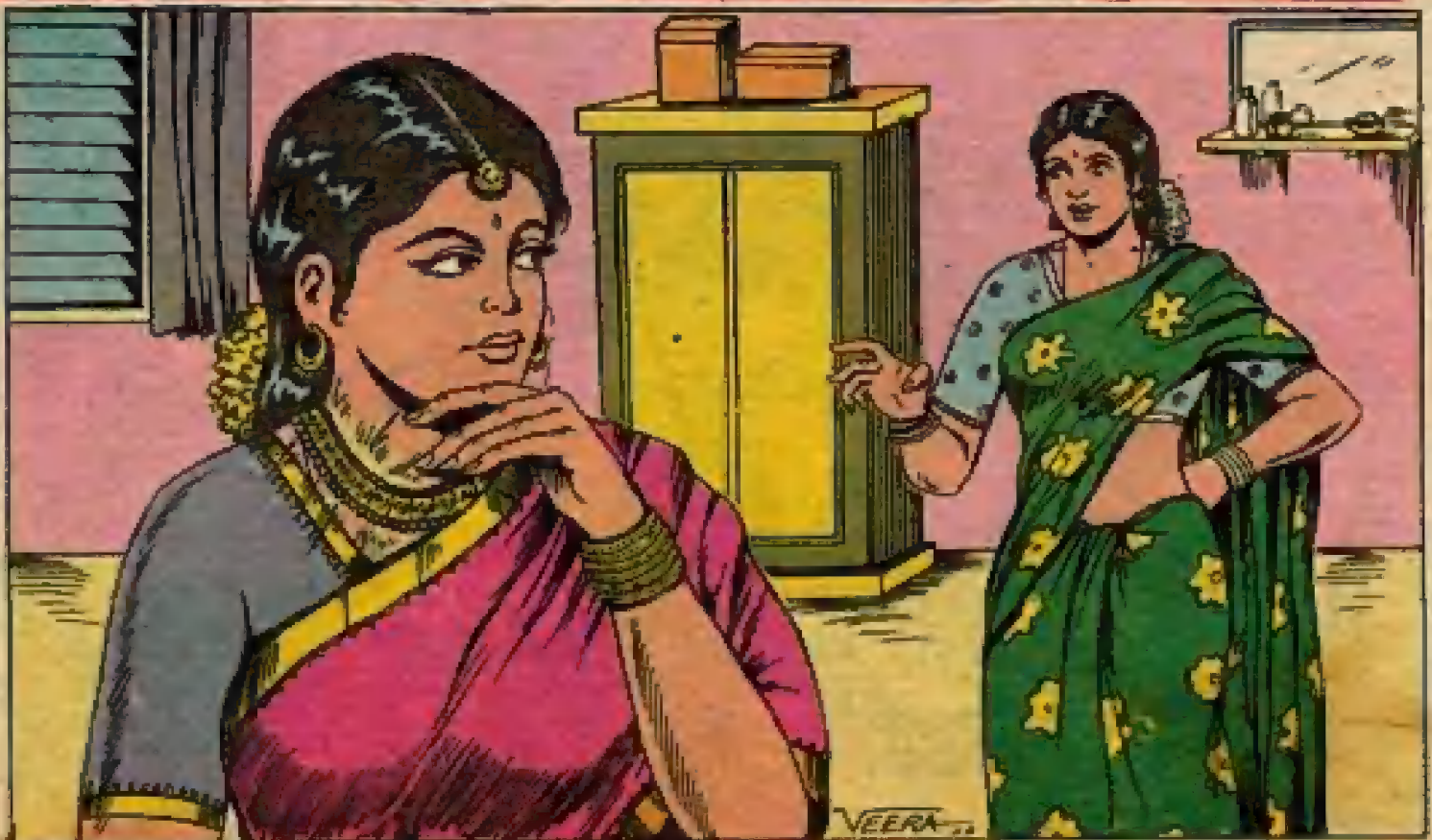
Blushing, Kusum said, "My husband returned from the town last night. He brought this for me. Is it not rather extravagant of him to spend so much money

on a gold necklace for me? But, as you said, it looks charming."

"The necklace is charming, but what is more, it makes you look even more charming," observed Leela.

Kusum blushed again and, hiding her smiling face half under her veil, dashed on into the next house. "Meera!" she called out softly.

"Hey Kusum! What brings you here so early? Arrey Kusum, my lucky sister, who



gave you this necklace?" Meera asked.

"Who but your Madhavbhai!" revealed Kusum with a twinkle in her eye.

"Madhavbhai has taste, I must say!"

By noon Kusum had visited every house in her small village, under some pretext or the other. Most of the women took note of her necklace themselves. Those who did not, Kusum drew their attention to it directly or indirectly. All, of course, praised it and that made her very happy.

Tulasidas, the celebrated sage, had paid a visit to the

village that very day. In the afternoon the villagers gathered before him and he recited to them his verse singing the glory of Rama and Sita and spoke to them on matters spiritual. All sat absorbed in listening to his talk. Among them was Kusum. But she paid very little attention to what the sage said. She was looking askance at those around her to see if they noticed her necklace which she kept partly visible.

The meeting was over. The villagers went to the sage one by one and bowed to him and received his blessings.

Last of all went Kusum. She



knelt down before the sage, touched his feet with her forehead and then raised her head, but kept sitting, smilingly looking at him.

"Do you have something to say, my child?" asked the compassionate sage.

"Nothing in particular, Baba, but..." Kusum stopped at the middle of her sentence, blushing.

"Yes?" the sage waited.

Hurriedly Kusum spoke out, "Look at this necklace. It is gold, you know, that is quite costly. My husband bought it. Is it not unwise of him to spend so much for me?"

She blushed after saying this.

The sage understood Kusum's mind. He kept his hand on her head and said softly, "My child, it is good to be grateful to your husband for his giving you the necklace. But have you ever felt grateful to the one who gave you the neck for wearing your necklace?"

Kusum kept looking at the sage's face. Slowly tears came to her eyes. The sage smiled to her once again and said, "Be grateful to Him, child, and you will have true happiness in your life."

Kusum bowed to the sage once more before she rose.



HOW THE TOAD GOT ITS WARTS

Once upon a time, in the southern forests there lived an old man and his wife. It was spring, and before the rains set in, they had to clear the forest slopes around their small hut and prepare the ground for a crop.

The old woman, clearing the underbrush alongside her husband, muttered to herself as she worked. The old man would occasionally nod, as a matter of habit. Being partially deaf there was little he understood, but it sufficed that he nodded. As they toiled, they would pause occasionally to rest, and it was

during one of these brief intervals that the old woman thought she heard a voice say, "I'll snatch that axe and sickle from the old couple."

At first she imagined that she was dreaming. Then looking around, she noticed a toad peeping from the hollow of a tree.

"Did you say something?" she enquired.

"I did," replied the toad.

"What did you say?" asked the old woman.

"That I was going to snatch your axe and sickle."

The old woman turned to her





husband. "Old man," she shouted in his ear, "that toad says he is going to snatch our axe and sickle!"

The old man merely shook his head and went on with his work.

After a while, the toad croaked again and said, "These two old people think I am joking. Watch the fun when I run off with their axe and sickle."

At that the old woman paused and stared at the amphibious creature with its smooth grey green skin, protruding eyes and squat ungainly body.

"Go away and leave us alone!" she shrieked. But the

toad croaked and stared at her.

"Did you hear what that toad just said?" she demanded. The old man ignored her and continued with his work.

She moved some distance away from where the toad sat glaring at her. But she need not have moved. A few minutes later she heard the same voice, "I'll certainly snatch your axe and sickle!" She turned and discovered that the toad had followed her and was seated on a rock close to where she was working.

"Do you hear, my old man?" she shouted as she grabbed her husband's arm and shook him. "This toad keeps repeating that he is going to snatch our axe and sickle."

The old man raised his head and stared at the toad. Having heard what his wife had said he grew alarmed.

"How can we work if this creature takes away our axe and sickle? Let's go away," he cried.

The old couple scurried along the path through the forest. In their haste to get away from the toad, they did not notice a snake moving across the path. The old man, short-sighted as well as hard of hearing, stepped on the snake's tail as he ran; the old

woman, close on his heels, stepped on its back.

The snake lashed his tail in anger, "These humans!" he said to himself, "They think they own the forest!"

Angry with the world at large he darted through the underbrush bent on destruction. When he saw a tailor bird's nest hanging on a bush quite close to the ground, he poked his head into it. There lay three eggs.

"Serves the tailor bird right for leaving her nest," he thought as he ate all three though his grievance was against the old human couple. Then he slipped quietly away into the forest.

Meanwhile, the tailor bird, who had gone in search of her supper, returned, and found to her dismay that the eggs which she had laid had disappeared. Dejected, she left her nest and flew deep into the forest. On and on she flew and paused to rest on the branch of a big tree on which lived a hornbill. The tailor bird shook his feathers and some dirt fell on the hornbill who sat on a lower branch.

Disgusted at the unseemly behaviour of the new-comer the hornbill left the tree and flew down into the valley.



He stopped when he came to a tree which was laden with the jackfruit. Giving vent to his anger he struck at the largest of the jackfruit with his beak and then flew away.

The jackfruit fell with great force on a deer's back. The deer, startled at the violence of the unexpected blow, dashed through the valley and did not stop until it reached a field where some wild fowls were feasting on grain left over from the harvest. The deer, still smarting from the blow, pranced and jumped, kicking his hind legs high into the air. The wild fowls in alarm flew in



all directions.

They went to report the matter to the king. As they neared the palace, they discovered that the king's grain, after a rich harvest, had been spread out to dry on the ground outside the palace. The fowls forgot their mission and began to eat the grain. They were in the midst of a royal feast when one of the palace-guards happened to pass by.

"What are you doing with the king's grain?" he yelled. "I shall report your mischief to the king!"

The king sent the palace guard back to fetch the wild

fowls and asked them why they had eaten up his grain.

"If it pleases Your Majesty," said one of the fowls, "we were on our way to the palace to report the deer who had frightened us. But we forgot all about that at the sight of the excellent grain and"

The king decided to send for the deer. The king's soldiers searched the forest and finally found the deer resting in the shade of the same jackfruit tree from which the fruit had fallen.

"Why did you disturb the wild fowls?" asked the king when the deer was brought before him.

"Your Majesty," replied the deer, "I stopped to rest under the shade of a tree when a jackfruit fell with great force on my back and hurt me. So I ran and did not know when I threatened the fowls in the process."

The jackfruit must be sent for, decided the king. The soldiers were sent into the valley. On the ground beneath the tree lay the jackfruit.

Before the king, the jackfruit said: "I did not mean to hurt the deer, Your Majesty. If the hornbill had not struck me so violently with his beak, I would not have fallen from the tree."

The king sent for the hornbill. The hornbill was discovered deep in the forest, and reluctantly appeared before the king. When asked why it had hit the fruit, it replied, "I was resting under a tree. Your Majesty, when a tailor bird came and splattered dirt all over me. That is the reason why I attacked the fruit on the tree."

The king was determined to get to the root of the matter. So he sent for the tailor bird. Now, the tailor bird had built itself a new nest in the forest, and it was some time before she could be found. When she arrived at the palace the king asked her why she had insulted the hornbill.

"Your Majesty," came the reply, "I did not intend to insult the hornbill. I was upset because a snake had eaten all the eggs I had laid."

"All your eggs? That's rather serious," said the king.

So the search for the snake began. Now snakes are difficult creatures to find in the forest because in the day time they hide themselves amongst rocks and in crevices and in holes and even coil themselves round the branches of trees. However, it was found and brought before the king.



"I was hurt and angry. Your Majesty, when the old man and his wife stepped on me," said the snake when questioned, "and I ate the tailor bird's eggs in order to wreak my vengeance on somebody. I had no particular grievance against the bird."

The couple were sought out soon. "The toad terrified us, my lord, and in our haste we did not see the snake!" the old man said.

"So the toad is at the bottom of all the trouble, thought the king. "Let us send for him and see what he has to say."

The toad when he was sent

for, had, strangely enough, nothing to say.

"Why, why, why," persisted the king, "did you threaten to take away the axe and the sickle belonging to this old couple?"

"I was only out to tease them. Your Majesty," came the sheepish reply. "I did not think they would take me seriously."

The king, at first confounded, decided to teach the toad a lesson.

"I shall punish you so that you and all other animals in the forest will remember to be thoughtful and considerate in future," said the king. "Did you not think of the harm you were doing by teasing the old man and the woman? You frightened them for nothing, but look at the chain reaction! They hurt the snake, the snake ate the


taylor bird's eggs, and the tailor bird upset the hornbill, and so on and so forth till I lost some of my grain! Think of the damage you have done."

He sent one of his courtiers into the royal kitchen and ordered a flat iron, well heated in the fire, to be brought to him. This, he thrust on the toad's back. In an instant, thousands of wart-like blisters covered its entire back as the skin sizzled and burned. The toad howled in pain and hopped out of the palace, and hopped and hopped away into the forest, howling as he went. He was never seen again.

That is the reason why, the animals of the forest say, that the toad has a wart-like skin even to this day.

Retold by Kusum Kapur





*New Tales of King Vikram
and the Vampire*

CRAZY IN THE FOREST

Dark was the night and weird the atmosphere. It rained from time to time. Roars of thunder subdued the moaning of jackals and the eerie laughter of spirits. Flashes of lightning showed fearful faces.

But King Vikram swerved not. He climbed the ancient tree once again and brought the corpse down. However, as soon as he began crossing the desolate cremation ground with the corpse lying astride on his shoulder, the vampire that possessed the corpse observed, "O King, I don't know who it is that has inspired you to undertake this unusual work. Whoever he might be, can you depend on his conduct? My question is triggered by the fact that people often behave strangely. Let me give you an example to illustrate my point. Pay attention to it. That might bring you some relief."

The vampire went on: In the city of Kanchipur lived Ravi-



lost interest in life; did not care for her food and sleep. She passed her time pensively.

One day she proposed to Ravigupta, "Get married again. Your second wife might bring forth children. In fact, I have already chosen a bride for you. She is Vasanti, my cousin. She is an exceptionally good-natured girl."

"Are you mad?" shouted Ravigupta. Do you look upon me as a young man of marriageable age? I don't care if I am childless! I can very well adopt a son. There are so many instances of adopted children proving even more faithful than one's own children!"

Her husband's refusal to her proposal deeply hurt Lakshmi. Soon she took to bed, and after a brief illness, breathed her last.

It was a great shock to Ravigupta. He repented for having refused to consider her proposal. Soon Vasanti's parents pressed upon him to marry their daughter. Ravigupta agreed to it. The marriage was solemnised without any pomp and show.

Vasanti gave birth to a son. Ravigupta and all his well-wishers were delighted. The boy was christened Lakshmiprasad, after his first wife's name.

gupta. He was a trader and he was loved and respected by all.

They had been traders for several generations. Ravigupta's grandfather and father had prospered well and had left much wealth for him. He had earned a lot himself. But he was not quite happy. It was because he was childless. In those days to die childless was considered rather unfortunate. Ravigupta often brooded on the situation. Who will enjoy all the wealth? Who will perform his funeral rites?

The one who brooded on these issues more than Ravigupta was his wife, Lakshmi. She

Now Ravigupta was beset with another anxiety. He was growing old. It was doubtful if he would be living till a time when Lakshmiprasad had sufficiently matured to take charge of his business. Who will take care of his property till then?

He decided to change his wealth into gold coins so that it will be easy to preserve them for the child's future. He sold his lands, orchards and disposed of parts of his business and collected gold with their value.

But the problem was not entirely solved. His main business has to continue for his boy to take it over when he can. Besides, the gold has to be kept hidden at a safe place and someone has to know the secret to pass it on to Lakshmiprasad afterwards. Vasanti was noble and truthful, but she had one defect in her nature. She could hardly keep anything to herself. Besides, she had a brother who was sly and wayward. It should be easy for him to swindle her.

There was one man in whom Ravigupta reposed absolute trust. He was Vinayak. An orphan, he had grown up in Ravigupta's household. His allegiance to his master was above question.



Ravigupta called Vinayak into his bedroom and told him privately, "I intend to lay a great responsibility on you. Will you promise to bear it faithfully?"

"I'm ready to take oath, touching your feet, that I'll discharge the responsibility faithfully and truthfully."

"Touching my feet won't do. There are the images of Lord Rama, Mother Sita and the great Hanuman. Touch their feet and assure me that you'll do my bidding faithfully," commanded Ravigupta. Vinayak took the oath without the least hesitation.

Ravigupta announced publicly that he had appointed Vinayak his son's guardian.

Hardly three months had passed when Ravigupta died suddenly of heart-failure. Vinayak at once rose to the occasion. He poured himself heart and soul into managing his master's affairs. Although Vasanti was not capable of taking stock of her, late husband's business, Vinayak reported to her, without fail, whatever happened everyday.

Ravigupta's business prospered under his supervision. But Vinayak himself lived in the manner of an humble servant.

There were people to be jealous of Vinayak. Some of them whispered to Vasanti, "Too much show of devotion is to be suspected. Is it not high time for you and your son to take charge of your property? How long to leave the secret of the hidden wealth to a servant?"

The simple-natured Vasanti one day told Vinayak, "I think my son has grown up enough to take charge of our property and business. What is your opinion?"

"My master had asked me to wait till he completes eighteenth year of age. I am aware that he will be completing that age the



next month. I shall then happily lead him to the place where my master's gold lies deposited," said Vinayak.

A month passed. Vinayak led Lakshmiprasad into a forest, driving the cart himself. But, on reaching a certain spot, he suddenly behaved like a mad man—goggling his eyes and scratching his head; and laughing.

"What's the matter, Vinubhai? What about our hidden property?" asked Lakshmiprasad.

"Ha ha!"

Laughing is all Vinayak did. Growing a sort of fear in his heart, Lakshmiprasad returned to the cart. Vinayak followed him and drove the cart silently.

Vasanti heard about Vinayak's strange conduct from her son. But Vinayak behaved as if he remembered nothing of it.

Next day, at a suggestion from Vasanti, Vinayak got ready to go to the spot where the gold was buried. This time both Lakshmiprasad and Vasanti accompanied him.

Surprisingly, Vinayak behaved in the same fashion once he was in the forest. He laughed wildly and showed no sign of



recognising Vasanti or her son!

The mother and son returned home disappointed. Vinayak followed them.

Next day Vinayak said to Vasanti, "Mother, should my young master accompany me to the forest, I'll dig out his father's wealth for him."

Vasanti called some of their trusted kinsmen and all of them followed Vinayak. To her amazement, Vinayak's behaviour was perfectly normal. He dug at a place and brought out five jarfuls of gold. Ravigupta had left a sealed document. It was found that the jars and their contents quite tallied

with the document.

Vasanti and Lakshmiprasad were satisfied. They were all praise for Vinayak. The party returned from the forest.

The vampire paused for a moment and asked King Vikram in a challenging tone: "O King, what was the reason for Vinayak behaving in that strange manner? Obviously, he wanted to keep the property away for them, but was afraid of doing so when they came with a number of people. Am I right? Answer me, O King, if you can. Should you keep mum despite your knowledge of the answer, your head would roll off your shoulder!"

Answered King Vikram forthwith: "Vinayak was noble and humble. He had no desire to keep the wealth out of the hands of its legitimate owners.

But he knew that there were mischievous people who could plant suspicion in the minds of Vasanti and Lakshmiprasad. He wanted to be assured that nobody would say afterwards that he had kept a part of the wealth for himself. That is why he wanted witnesses to be present when the wealth was dug out. But he could not suggest such a thing, for that would show that he doubted Vasanti and Lakshmiprasad. That is why he behaved in a queer manner and Vasanti was obliged to bring her kinsmen with her. They stood witness to Vinayak's delivering the wealth to its owners, without knowing that they were acting as witnesses!"

No sooner had the king concluded his answer than the vampire, along with the corpse, gave him the slip.



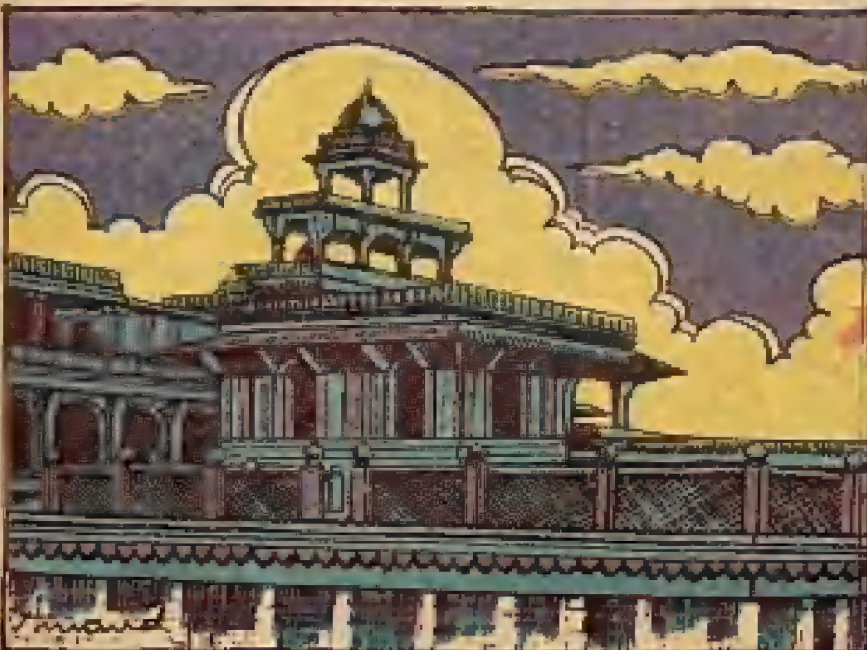


STORY OF INDIA-77

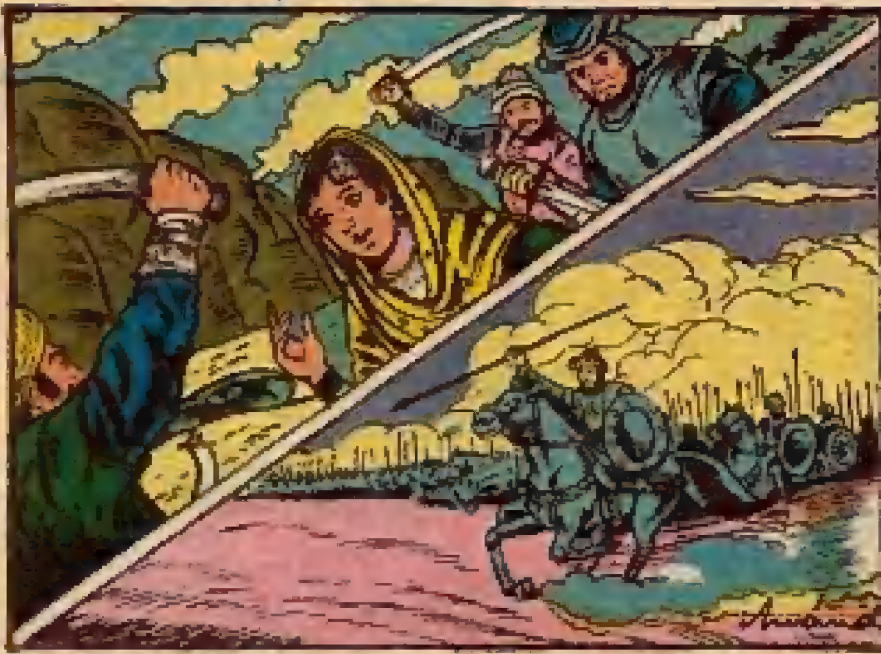
THE GREATEST MUGHAL

Sikri, about 40 Km from Agra, was a charming place. There, on a hillock, lived a sage, named Shaikh Salim Chisti. Akbar adored him much and greatly valued his company and sought his blessing.

In 1569, to Akbar's Rajput queen was born a son. Akbar believed that behind this was Shaikh Salim Chisti's blessing. That is why he named the child Salim. It was this prince who later succeeded him to the throne as Emperor Jahangir.



Akbar decided to build a fort at Sikri in honour of the sage. Magnificent buildings rose. Akbar made it his capital. It was from here that he marched upon Gujarat and won a victory. Sikri became known as Fatehpur or the Victory Town.



In 1593 Akbar sent an expedition against Ahmadnagr. The king of Ahmadnagr had just died, but his sister Chandbibi, the widowed queen of Bijapur, offered a strong resistance to Akbar's army led by Prince Murad.

But after giving a valiant fight to the Mughals, she realised that it will not be possible to withstand the powerful attack for long. She sent her emissary to the enemy camp and agreed to give away Berar to the Mughals if they left Ahmadnagr in peace.



The Mughals went back, but some of the nobles of Ahmadnagr did not like Chandbibi's move for compromise. They stabbed Chandbibi to death. The result was, the Mughals annexed the whole of Ahmadnagr.

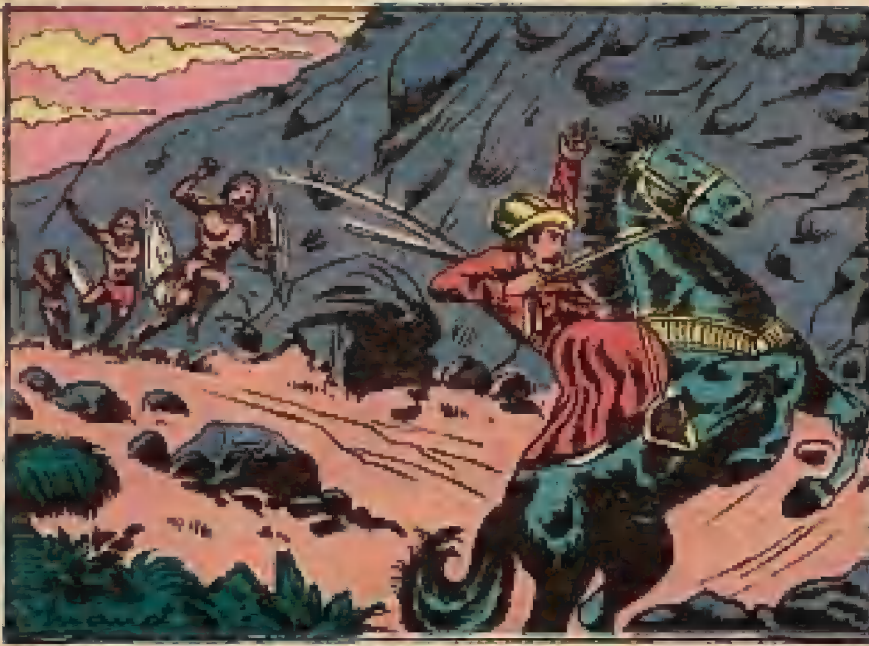
By and by Akbar built a large empire. He was no mere conqueror, but an able administrator. One of his ministers, Abul Fazl, wrote the history of his rule. The work is known as *Ain-i-Akbari*.



The legendary musician Tansen was patronised by Akbar. Among Akbar's other great courtiers were Raja Birbal, a wise and witty minister, Faiz, a gifted poet, and Todarmall, the revenue minister, who introduced land reforms.

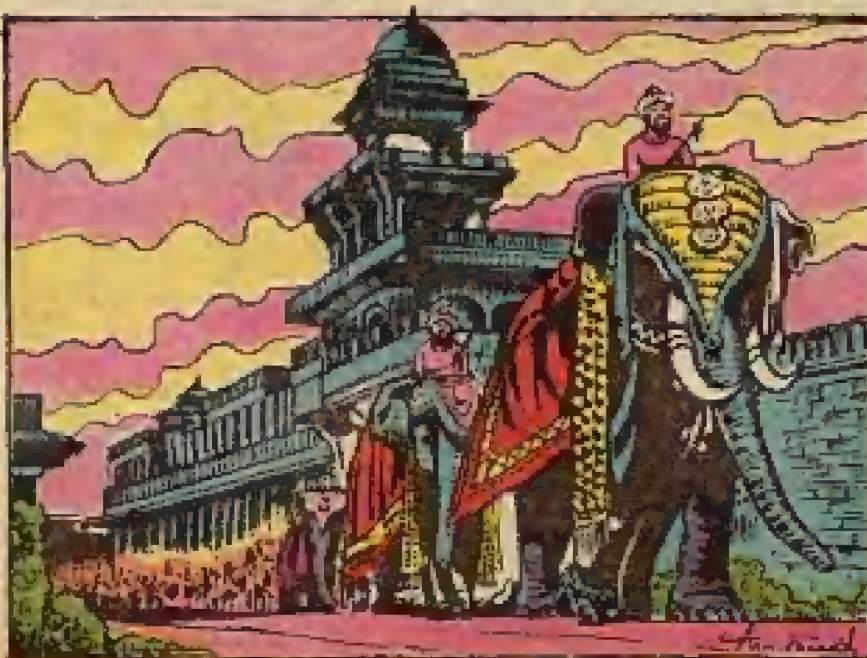
Akbar saw that religious differences among the people divided them. He proclaimed a new religion, *Din-i-Ilahi*, combining elements from Hinduism, Islam and other religions. This new religion, of course, did not thrive.





Though a great emperor, Akbar had many sorrows. Birbal was killed in the north-western frontier. His dear friend, Abul Fazl, was brutally murdered at the instigation of his son Salim who had grown very unruly and ambitious. Akbar was shaken by these two deaths.

A team of three Englishmen, led by John Newberie, met Akbar at Fatehpur Sikri, with a letter from Queen Elizabeth I of England. They were the first official English visitors to India!



Akbar's favourite town Fatehpur Sikri did not thrive, primarily because of scarcity of water. Akbar deserted the magnificent fort. Prince Salim's conduct also saddened him much. He died in 1605. He was the greatest of Mughals.

LEGEND OF THE LOST ATLANTIS

Did a great civilisation once flourish on an island? That is what an old manuscript discovered in Holland in 1871 says. The island had in plenty everything and the people were truthful, just and highly cultured. Peace and prosperity marked their life.

But one day a great calamity struck the island. The civilisation that had grown over centuries vanished in a matter of moments! Soon the whole island went under water.

The sensational book found

in Holland only supports what Plato, the celebrated Greek philosopher who lived during 5th and 4th centuries B.C., wrote. He informs us of Atlantis—a city that had developed around its magnificent royal palace and a temple dedicated to the presiding deity of the city. The temple was a dazzling monument not only because it was plastered with gold, silver and ivory, but also because it abounded in a precious metal called "orichalch". What this metal was we do not know. But



it was radiant like fire!

Plato says that the island-civilisation had a fleet of 1,200 ships.

Says Plato: "Atlantis was rich in metals, in fruits and animals unknown to the rest of the world. Its inhabitants were men of honour and acquired their wealth in harmony and virtue.

"Unfortunately they succumbed to the inexorable law of decadence; the human elements of luxury and greed gained ascendancy over the divine element.

"They made war to aggrandise themselves, and God punished them by destroying their land."

Well, Plato stops abruptly. He does not say how exactly Atlantis was destroyed.

There are many theories. Some say a volcanic eruption burnt and buried the city; others say, it was submerged. Immanuel Velikovsky, in his book *Worlds in Collision*, suggests that Atlantis went up in flames when a giant comet passed close by the earth.

While some historians and scientists believe that the legends of Atlantis are only fiction, there are many who believe that such a civilisation indeed did exist. From the tone of Plato's writing it is clear that during his time the story of



Atlantis was accepted as a fact.

Among several proofs for the existence of Atlantis presented by Robert Charroux in *The Mysterious and Unknown*, one is : "Petrels, small brown migratory birds, cross the Atlantic from Europe to America every September and October. When they reach a point about 600 miles south-west of Cape Verde, they circle round persistently, then set off again towards Brazil. Their memory-chromosomes tell them that once upon a time there was a landing-place here—Atlantis."

Something strange happened in the recent past. Edgar Cayce (1877–1945), the famous Amer-

ican occultist, said in a trance in 1933, that a part of the temple of Atlantis "may yet be discovered under the slime of ages of seawater—near what is known as Bimini, off the coast of Florida."

In 1968 was discovered a huge chunk of stone structure lying on the sea-bed, off the coast of Bimini.

Cayce believed that the people of Atlantis were experts in the use of a kind of stones that could draw force from the stars. He calls them "Terrible Crystals". According to him an excessive concentration of such force one day destroyed the wonderful city.





A Folktale from the Middle East

THREE TRAVELLERS

In a far country lived a poor peasant. About to die of old age, he told his three sons, "I'm sorry, I am unable to leave behind me any wealth for you. But all my life I have prayed to God to give you wit, wisdom and the power of observation. I have a feeling that God has granted my prayer and that if you can impress the Sultan with your talents, you will be well provided for."

Soon after their father's death the three brothers set out for the town. They wished to try their luck with the Sultan. But they knew how difficult it is to meet him.

It was noon and they were not far from the town. A horseman who came from the opposite direction was seen looking for something at the cross-roads.

"Gentleman, are you looking

for a big camel?" asked the eldest brother.

"Right," answered the rider, looking happy.

"Was the camel blind in its left eye?" asked the second brother.

"Right, right!"

"Did it carry a lady and a child?" asked the youngest brother.

"Right, right, right! Now, please tell me when and where you saw them!" queried the rider, a bit impatient.

"Well, we have not seen them. However, should you take to the road to the east...."

The answer was rudely interrupted by the rider who shouted at them, saying, "Do you take me to be a baffoon? You have not seen them and yet you claim to have known my wife and my child riding a one-eyed big

camel! Speak out where and when you saw them!"

"Sir, believe us, we have not seen them!" politely informed the eldest brother.

"I won't be surprised if you fellows have been a party to any mischief that is done to them, but being fools, have given out half of the truth! Come, let us go to the Sultan. You deserve severe punishment which he alone can give!" said the rider in a threatening voice and led the three brothers to the Sultan's court.

The horseman, being a member of the nobility, found entry into the court without any difficulty. He presented the three brothers to the Sultan and reported all about the encounter he had had with them.

The Sultan looked at the young men intently and demanded to know what they had to say.

"My lord, we have not seen the camel and its riders. Our observations were drawn from certain other things we saw," said the eldest brother, and he added, "Had the gentleman taken to the road to the east, he would have already found his wife and child by this time!"

"Really? Are you chaps that



keen observers? Well, well, let's try you!" said the Sultan. Then he whispered something to his minister.

The minister left the court. In a few minutes he returned with a big box carried by two bearers. After it had been placed before him, the Sultan asked, "Can you tell me if there is anything inside it?"

"My lord, this is empty except for a small round object," said the eldest.

"And the object is likely to be a pomegranate," said the second brother.

"And it is an unripe one," said the youngest.



The Sultan ordered the box to be opened. To everybody's surprise, it was seen to contain a raw pomegranate.

"Bravo!" exclaimed the Sultan. Looking at the rider, he said, "From the beginning I thought that these young men are far from being mischievous or foolish. My friend, gallop forth to the east without delay and I'm sure you will find your wife, child and camel."

Turning to the three brothers, the Sultan asked, "Now, will you please tell me how you knew what the box contained?"

"My lord, from the way the bearers handled the box it was

obvious that it was empty. However, when they put the box down, one end of it touched the ground slightly before the other end. At once the sound of something rolling inside could be heard and that also made it clear that the thing was round. While coming to your presence through the courtyard we had noticed a pomegranate tree standing at the doorway. The box came from the pavillion on the other side of the courtyard. We thought that the pomegranate must have come handy for being put in the box. Since the season for pomegranates to ripen was yet to come, it had to be a raw one!" explained the brothers.

"Excellent. Now, will you please reveal how you knew so much about the rider's camel?" asked the Sultan with great curiosity.

"My lord, we had observed the footprints of the camel on the road. From the size of the footprints and the deep imprint they had made we knew that it was a large camel, probably with a rider or two. We further observed that the animal had grazed on the grass only to its right side. That informed us that it could not see with its left eye.



At one place the camel had rested and there, on the sands, we saw the tiny footprints of a child, beside those of a grown-up person. We concluded that the grown-up one was a lady because it was natural for such a small child to be accompanied by a lady," explained the brothers.

The Sultan's satisfaction was expressed through his clapping his hands which he rarely did. The courtiers followed him even more enthusiastically. He

offered jobs to the three brothers instantly.

"My lord, we must confess that it is not merely to demonstrate our power of observation that we talked to the rider in that manner, but...."

"You were trying to create an opportunity to be ushered into my presence. Am I right?" asked the Sultan.

"Absolutely, O wise one!" exclaimed the three happy brothers.



RASHMI'S WONDER CAT

Rashmi was not known for boasting or lying. Naturally all were startled upon her declaring that her cat could announce its own name.

"What's your cat's name?" asked a friend.
"Miao!" replied Rashmi.



THE LITTLE MAN MEETS THE GIANT

long the giant and the little man saw each other. The little man smiled and nodded. That surprised the giant, for till that day whoever saw him either took to his heels or fainted.

"Who are you?" asked the giant, coming near the traveller.

"I am the giant-crusher, looking for a certain giant who is somewhere here. Have you seen any?" asked the little man.

The giant did not know whether to laugh or to cry. He gaped and blinked for a full minute and then asked, "Are you sure you can crush a giant?"

"Why? Are giants harder than stones?" said the little man. He pretended to pick up a stone and pressed it in his tight grip. Water dripped from it as it cracked. What really he crushed was a small cucumber he was carrying with him for eating when hungry.

The surprised giant picked up

In a certain village lived a little man. No, he was not a child; in fact he was quite grown up. But because he was lean and of small height, the villagers called him the little man.

He did not mind. To all who tried to slight him, he would smilingly say, "Wait, some day I will prove how great I am!"

And one day he walked out of his village and headed towards the capital. On the lonely road he met two travellers who were rushing in the opposite direction. "Don't proceed, little man, for there is a giant sitting on a roadside hill."

The littleman, nevertheless, persisted in his journey. Before

a stone and tried to crush it, but could not. In disgust he threw it away to a great distance.

"Can you hurl anything that far?" asked the giant.

"That far? Did you mean that was far at all? Well, let me see..."

The little man picked up a pebble and threw it at a tiny bird that sat on a branch. At once the bird sprang up and flew away.

"Look—look— how far my stone is going! Ha ha!"

The giant blinked and gaped for full two minutes this time, looking at the bird disappearing in the clouds.

"Gentleman, I've not seen

any giant, believe me, yes sir, believe me!" he said, saluting the little man.

The little man reached the capital and found everybody gloomy. Two giants were laying the town waste and the king's army was no match for it. Whoever can kill the giants will get half of the kingdom—the king had announced.

The little man met the king and assured him that he will do the needful. The king's spies informed him where generally the two giants enjoyed their mid-day nap. It was under a certain tree. The little man went there in the morning and climbed the tree and waited.



By noon the two giants came there and fell asleep in the shade. The little man already knew one of them and knew the fact that the giants had little intelligence. He threw a stone down. It hit one. He woke up and shook the other and growled angrily, "Don't disturb me!"

"I didn't disturb you!" growled back the other and both fell asleep again. This time the little man dropped a stone on the second giant. He sat up and slapped the other and shouted, "Did I not say that I did not

disturb you? Why do you harass me?"

At once they were locked in a fight. Before long both lay dead.

The little man whistled. That was the signal for the soldiers who were waiting behind a hill to come. They came and dragged the two giants into the town.

The little man returned to his village as the king of that part of the kingdom. Nobody ever called him by his old name. He was His Majesty the Great Giant-Crusher King!



PHOTO CAPTION CONTEST



Chandrapal Singh



Chandrapal Singh

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PICKS FROM THE WISE

A bore is a man who spends so much time talking about himself that you can't talk about yourself.

—Melville D. Landon.

The trouble with the world is that the stupid are cocksure and the intelligent full of doubt.

—Bertrand Russell.

A reasonable amount of fleas is good for a dog; it keeps him from brooding over being a dog.

—Edward Noyes Westcott.



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